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will not lose interest in the little republic that was founded by her citizens. Tho its future history may be a good deal more concerned with the development of the British colony of Sierra Leone and the French colony of the Ivory Coast, the United States may at any rate take to itself the credit of having founded the first civilized independent negro state in West Africa, a land in which, if the negro have but patience to bear with us for a while, and with our help to frame a civilization of his own to suit his own environment, he may come to find himself independent of white tutelage, and an equally endowed collaborator with the Caucasian in a world-wide civilization.

LONDON, ENGLAND.

No, I didn't have any relation in mind. R.F.

The Trial by Existence

BY ROBERT FROST

EVEN the bravest that are slain
Shall not dissemble their surprise
On waking to find valor reign
Even as on earth in paradise:
And where they sought without the sword
Wide fields of asphodel fore'er,
To find that the utmost reward
Of daring should be still to dare.

The light of heaven falls whole and white
And is not shattered into dyes,
The light forever is morning light;
The hills are verdured pasturewise;
The angel hosts with freshness go
And seek with laughter what to brave;
And binding all is the hushed snow
Of the far-distant breaking wave.

And from a cliff top is proclaimed
The gathering of the souls for birth,
The Trial by Existence named,
The obscuration upon earth.
And the slant spirits trooping by
In streams and cross- and counter-streams
Can but give ear to that sweet cry
For its suggestion of what dreams.

And the more loitering are turned
To view once more the sacrifice
Of those who for some good discerned
Will gladly give up paradise.
And a white shimmering concourse rolls
Toward the throne to witness there
The speeding of devoted souls
Which God makes his especial care.

And none are taken but who will
Having first heard the life read out
That opens earthward, good and ill
Beyond the shadow of a doubt.

And very beautifully God limns,
And tenderly, life's little dream,
But naught extenuates or dims,
Setting the thing that is supreme.

Nor is there wanting in the press
Some spirit to stand simply forth
Heroic in its nakedness
Against the uttermost of earth.
The tale of earth's unhonored things
Sounds nobler there than 'neath the sun;
And the mind whirls and the heart sings
And a shout greets the daring one.

But always God speaks at the end:
"One thought in agony of life
The bravest would have by for friend,
The memory that he chose the life;
But the pure fate to which you go
Admits no memory of choice,
Or the woe were not earthly woe
To which you give the assenting voice."

And so the choice must be again,
But the last choice is still the same.
And the awe passes wonder then
And a hush falls for all acclaim.
And God has ta'en a flower of gold
And broken it, and used therefrom
The mystic link to bind and hold
Spirit to matter till death come.

'Tis of the essence of life here,
Tho we choose greatly, still to lack
The lasting memory, at all clear,
That life has for us on the wrack
Nothing but what we somehow chose:
Thus are we wholly stripped of pride
In the pain that has but one close,
Bearing it crushed and mystified.

WEST DERBY, N. H.

Literature

The Fighting Chance

THE interpretation which Mrs. Wharton attempted of New York society in "The House of Mirth," Robert Chambers has really accomplished in his new novel.* And it appears that the situation is not so hopeless as she represented. The people are bad, of course, but Chambers shows the reason why, and so at last we get the mitigating circumstances. They are great sinners, just as the Turks are great sinners, but, like the Turks, they do not know it; therefore not such great sinners after all. At least, not the morbid, self-damned souls that Mrs. Wharton would have us believe. The trouble with Mrs. Wharton is that she has a literary preacher understanding. She uses humanity for a text and the good and bad of human conduct to illustrate her preconceived point of view, for a background against which the spire of her ethics shines. This is all very well in a sermon, but it has nothing much to do with a truthful interpretation of life, because she understands not life, but only the good and bad of it.

Mr. Chambers is not so much of a preacher, and he has that kind of genius which makes his mind an impartial negative of every line and shade of whatever passes before it and of the very spirit of things. Besides, he has a sort of literary *insouciance* which enables him to tell with startling inspiration what he sees. The marvelous descriptions of common and uncommon things in this book show that he can describe a man or a world just as God or the devil makes them without the bribery of a word or a sneer. This is to command a daring reality of expression and at the same time escape the fever, the sullen horror, of realism. The picture he draws of society life in New York is complete, with its accurate and elegant imitation of English customs, its aquatic phases, quash galleries, water-ball performances, its iniquities and dignified, unconscious snobbery, and it is really the most frightful revelation we have had of this kind of living; but it will not appear to be so to the casual reader, because what he has written is so embedded in life, so much a part of the atmosphere of wealth and of the gilded place generally that it is difficult to realize in terms of morality what is really going. But, primarily, Chambers is not thinking in these terms, he is catching in phrases and sentences every character line of the life, every color and charm of it, the taste and distinction and epicurean spirituality which go to make men and women who are born to gamble, drink and flirt, as others are born to honor and labor and chastity. That is why they are not so bad, these society people, as Mrs. Wharton represented them. They are simply not yet evolved. They are the hereditary outlaws of the moral order, and ought not to be held accountable to the same degree that we hold Christian, civilized people accountable.

However, there is in all fallen humanity a struggling upward might, and in this book it is represented by Siward, the hero, who has inherited an appetite for liquor. The tale tells, between the orgies of the other characters who have a greater capacity for staying sober under inebriating circumstances, of this man's failure in self-control, of his love and despair, how he is never to conquer, but at best must lead the camp life within of a spirit on guard. And from this the story takes its name. The idea is a good one, typifying all life in a way, and the author has portrayed it with a fine wisdom, where many another would have given the neurasthenic effect of fine nerves. And toward the end we come to the spire of the whole conception, and showing that genius always recognizes the fact that the ultimate solution of things, the last stand a man makes in such an extremity is always spiritual. In a conversation between Siward and his friend Plant, at a time when the former is down and out, with scarcely a fighting chance left, Siward wants to know if, after a man has lost his will and nerve

* THE FIGHTING CHANCE. *By Robert W. Chambers.* New York: D. Appleton & Co. $1.50.

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